

## 4. EXISTING CONDITIONS

There are several major factors which must be considered in analyzing an existing highway system for future travel. They include population, employment, land use, traffic and environmental concerns. These factors control the type of thoroughfare plan an area needs. The more population there is, for example, the more traffic on the highway; or the more desirable the land, the more newcomers are attracted to the area, thus more traffic. The most important part in a study is making growth forecasts from existing conditions and converting them into future travel. This chapter will take a look into the existing conditions in the Whiteville/Brunswick Urban Area. Appendix B includes details of the Traffic Model Development for existing and future conditions.

### POPULATION

Travel is directly related to population. The volume of traffic on a section of roadway is a function of the size and location of the population it serves. An analysis of the population is one of the first steps in planning a highway system. Although the City of Whiteville is the county seat, population growth for the urban area and county since the 1970's has been stagnate compared to the State. However population projections for the urban area is at a more moderate rate, because the area's officials are pushing strongly for more economic development.

**Table 1 - Population Projections**

Year	North Carolina	Columbus County	City of Whiteville	Town of Brunswick	Urban Area
1970	5,084,411	46,937	4,195	206	8,329
1980	5,880,415	51,037	5,565	223	8,833
1990	6,628,637	49,587	5,078	302	8,726
1994	7,070,034	50,084	5,690	310	9,978
2020	8,776,538	65,205	7,587	413	12,402

### EMPLOYMENT

An area's economic base is a very important factor. This encourages an active highway system. An area's economic base is affected by how efficiently the street system handles traffic.